

EDITORIAL TUESDAY
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OUR OPINION

Fund LRCA's river rescue

Acidic mine drainage is one of the most intractable legacies of the region's history of coal mining. Throughout the coal fields, millions of gallons of water are disgorged from old mines every day, bringing metals to the surface and downstream.

The most obvious of the problems is on the Lackawanna River in Duryea, where iron carried to the surface leaves a long orange plume in the water and dyes rocks and the riverbank downstream.

And downstream is a key environmental issue not just for Lackawanna County, but for the entire Susquehanna River watershed all the way to the Chesapeake Bay.

The Lackawanna River Corridor Association has done an admirable job in rehabilitating much of the Lackawanna and raising public awareness of the problems that persist. It is seeking solutions to the mine drainage problem, in addition to the commercial efforts of entrepreneur Chris Gillis, who wants to capture some of the disgorged metals for sale.

Bernie McGurl, the energetic LRCA executive director, is right on two important scores. Mr. Gillis' commercial effort is not the sole solution. And, most important, this is not a local issue.

The LRCA has filed applications for funds from the Susquehanna River Basin Commission, the state Department of Environmental Protection and Lackawanna County, in order to accurately measure the scope of the problem — a key step toward resolving it. All of those entities should contribute.

Meanwhile, the group should seek further assistance from the Chesapeake Bay Commission and the Environmental Protection Agency, with full support from the state congressional delegation.

Ultimately, all parties should cooperate in devising a step-by-step plan to attack this persistent environmental problem.